

DRAMA

# Kangal Malsat

**Bhaskar Dasgupta**

In his stage-adaptation of Kangal Malsat, Suman Mukhopadhyay's biggest blunder was to drop out the pivotal character Borilal. Nabarun Bhattacharya's novel is a phenomenal work. Seemingly an exploration of frolicsome putsch by lumpens and paupers, the text literally takes on the contemporary society, lock stock and barrel. Construed with defiance, its language is replete with vituperative outpourings. The loosely joined narrative blends remarkably with the antithetical comments on the existing ethos thus engendering a praiseworthy positive anarchy. The urbane society sustains through tendentious myths of 'Democracy', 'Secularism', 'Tagore' and what have you. These tripes are counterposed with figments of Fyataru, Chokdar, Labotomy etc. It is here, the author, with consummate craftsmanship, puts up Mephistophelean *Borilal* taking the reader on errands through hellish lower depths.

Without him, the \*play appears incoherent. Moreover, the entire load resting squarely on the protagonist *Bhodi*, the actor Supriyo Dutta looks exhausted and oversimplifies his job resorting to hackneyed stock in trade, that includes a notorious diction, reminiscent of late Jahar Ganguli, pattering the tail ends ad nauseam. Mukhopadhyay's penchant for acrobatics has begun to deliver diminishing returns. His excellent use of ropes as stage property, seen earlier, has now become his fixation and his too much of meddling with techniques splits wide open their inherent vulnerabilities.

The play begins with hovering *fyatarus* swaying on those ubiquitous ropes—so dimly lit and inadequately timed—that darkness falls before anyone can grasp what is going on. *Dandabayas*, the allegorical forefather in the form of raven (Sankar Debnath of *Bhagharu* fame) was made to walk on stilts and as luck would have it, he stumbled and had a great fall thereby snapping off the continuity of the entire play. How could the director, well known for his taste of music, approve such a banal background score! One is tempted to suggest Suman Mukhopadhyay to abstain from pursuing radicalism, willy nilly. With the Government of India underwriting the project, lampooning the overtly poetic chief minister for his diatribe "Do it now" falls flat. And in this land of Dinabandhu, Micheal and Girish who's so afraid of 'use of foul language in the play' that statutory warning is doubly necessary to be printed both in the entry pass and brochure? One is pained to observe the adaptation turning out so submissive towards the civil society, when the original is singularly subversive to all civility. ❄❄❄❄

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\*[A joint presentation by *Trityo Sutro* and *Chetana*. Play adaptation. Design and Direction: Suman Mukhopadhyay. 31st October '06. Madhusudan Mancha.]